

7/19/2006

COMMENTS ON MINIMUM WAGE DURING DEBATE ON THE PLEDGE PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

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OF WISCONSIN
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES
JULY 19, 2006**

Madam Speaker, for 9 years there has been no increase in the minimum wage.

Meanwhile, CEOs of the largest corporations in this country have seen their pay rise to record heights, almost

200 times the size of the paycheck for an average worker in this country.

For the last month, we on this side of the aisle have been trying to get the majority party to allow for a simple, straight up or down vote on increasing the minimum wage. We tried over a month ago to attach it

to the appropriations bill for the Department of Labor, and we succeeded. When we did, the majority party decided they would not allow that bill to come forward because they didn't like the results.

We are now told, if you read Congress Daily put out by the National Journal, we are now told that the Speaker of

the House, Mr. *Hastert*, is against the minimum wage increase; we are told that the Majority Leader of the House, Mr.

Boehner

, is against the minimum wage increase. But they don't want to evidently face this issue up or down.

So the article in CQ this

morning says, ``It is unlikely that GOP leaders would allow an up-or-down vote on a wage increase. Rather GOP aides say that if they craft a bill, it would likely include so-called sweeteners."

Madam Speaker, I am proud of the fact that on this side of the aisle, our Members do

not have to be maneuvered and cajoled and enticed into voting for a minimum wage increase. I am pleased by the fact that on this side of the aisle, Members do not need sweeteners in order to do what is right on this issue.

So we are trying today to attach the minimum wage increase to this bill. There

are those on the other side of the aisle who will say that is inappropriate. Well, the previous speaker just recited part of the Pledge of Allegiance. When we stand on this House floor every day and take that pledge, we pledge to provide liberty and justice for all; not for most, not just for CEOs, not just to the wealthiest 1 percent of people in this country, but for all.

This Congress has provided \$50 billion in tax cuts this year for people who make \$1 million or more a year, and yet it is steadfastly refusing, on the direction of the top Republican leadership of this House, it is steadfastly refusing to do anything at all on the wage front for people who live life on the underside.

I think it is disgraceful for a Member of Congress, or for this Congress, to allow a pay raise for Members of Congress to go through at the same time that they are trying to block an increase in the minimum wage for the poorest people among us.

We have 15 weeks between now and the election. Do you realize, Madam Speaker, that we are going to spend 4 of those weeks in town here, and 11 weeks we are going to be spending back home campaigning for reelection? Meanwhile we will have taken no action to provide a Manhattan-like project on the energy front so that we are not stuck with \$3 and \$4 gasoline prices.

This Congress will have taken no action to provide health care for every child in this country. It will have taken no action to guarantee that we provide as much protection for the average worker in a company as we do for the board of directors and the CEO if that company goes bankrupt. We are taking no action to make college

more affordable for every family in this country. We are not doing any of that.

Cannot we at least provide a minimal increase in the minimum wage for people who are living on life's edge? That is what we are asking you to do. I am amazed that we are told that we cannot do it.

Oh, you have time to strip a court from jurisdiction, just like you had time to call the Congress back to stick your nose in the family affairs of the Terry Schiavo family, but you do not have time and you do not have the will to provide some decent economic help to people who need it more than virtually anybody else in this society.

Shame on every one of you
who will not move on this
issue.

